



KEYS TO EFFECTIVE HEALTH PROMOTION



Key #11: Adapting to Health Information Technology

Health Information Technology (IT) can make the entire health care system more **effective** and **efficient** by enhancing:

- Documentation (lab and test results, clinic notes, consult recommendations)
- Communication (provider to patient, provider to provider)
- Information input (templates to facilitate data entry)
- Delivery of care (documenting all patient-provider interactions in a single system)
- Chronic disease risk identification (evaluation of risk factors, recommendations for appropriate preventive services and screenings)
- Consistent recording of correct billing codes

But, adapting to Health IT is a challenge.

- Health IT almost always involves a “new system.” Consequently, the entire staff, from health care providers to IM/IT personnel is on a learning curve.
- Existing IT infrastructure may not be adequate, so the Health IT system may be very slow, or may frequently crash.
- The new system may not have all the forms you need already in place. New forms may be needed.

Lessons learned from Army Health IT implementation

Take advantage of as many training opportunities as possible.

- Learn as much as you can about the Health IT that you need to use. Become an expert.
- Ask questions if you are unsure how to navigate the system.

Keep the big picture in mind.

- Be aware that those keeping the Health IT system up and running may have a very different set of priorities. The IM/IT staff may not see your request as a priority when it is taking all their manpower to trouble shoot the new system each day.
- Other changes to the Health IT system may be in line in front of yours, so be patient.
- Be aware of Health IT implementation issues at your Military Treatment Facility (MTF). If the entire MTF is in the process of being switched over to AHLTA (CHCS II), it may not be a good time to ask for a new form or a small change. If everyone is stressed to the max, it will be difficult to get changes implemented.

Think through changes thoroughly.

- Take time to think through a new form thoroughly. Know exactly what you want before talking to the developer.
- Don't think in a vacuum. If you build a form, make sure it is one your staff will use and find efficient.
- Make a draft version of the form and use it **before** requesting that it be put into the new system.
- Be prepared to build a good case for why your form should be created. Build a stronger case if your form should be developed ahead of other requests in the queue.
- Be patient and persistent when working with a programmer/developer on a new form. Meet frequently and set up timelines and deadlines.
- Coordinate with IM/IT and the Health IT contractor to see if they can support a new project in the required time frame.

For more information about Health IT implementation, go to the Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality (AHRQ) National Resource Center for Health Information Technology at <http://healthit.ahrq.gov>.

*To access the complete set of Keys to Effective Health Promotion, go to: <http://chppm-www.apgea.army.mil/dhpw/Population/HPPI.aspx>.
For questions about the HPPI Program contact us at: hppl_program_info@amedd.army.mil.*